



Red Hill Creek Expressway Project PROGRESS REPORT

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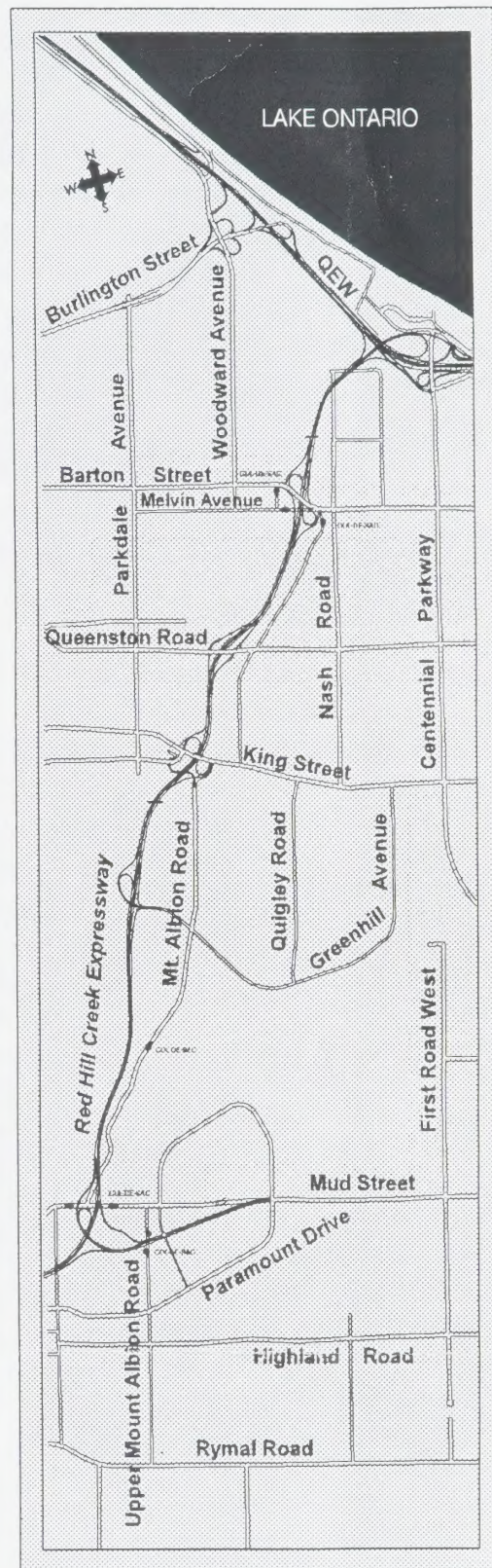
The Red Hill Creek Expressway Project has one of the most comprehensive environmental management programs for a road project in Ontario. How are the environmental aspects of the North-South Red Hill Creek Expressway being handled? What environmental impacts are there likely to be? This Progress Report responds to a number of commonly asked questions about the Expressway project. It outlines ongoing work and discusses a **Community Stakeholder Committee (CSC)** which is advising the Region during the impact prediction and design stages of the project.

The North-South Expressway & the Environment

- The Region's Vision 2020 policy requires consideration of the environmental, social and economic issues associated with Regional decision-making,
- The Region has legal responsibilities under various pieces of environmental legislation and
- The 1985 approval of the Expressway and the 1997 approval of modifications to the Expressway require the Region to address specific environmental concerns.

The Region has a responsibility to ensure that the Expressway design considers community and environmental impacts. There are three reasons for this:

Many of the impacts were identified in 1985 in the original environmental assessment for the road. Today, we have more knowledge about the natural environment in the Valley. The interests of the community and projected traffic requirements have also changed. Last year, the Region proposed and the Province accepted, a proposal to modify the road design to reduce environmental impacts and to better address the needs of the community.

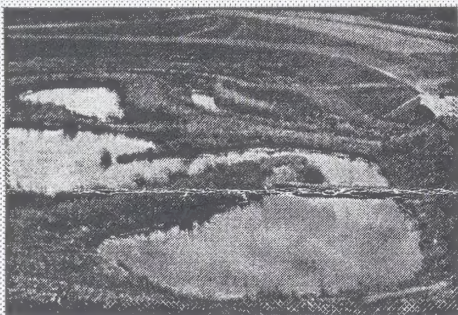


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- Public Open Houses and Meetings
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Environmental Features of Lincoln Alexander Parkway

- At the Dartnall Road Interchange the Creek was moved but kept in a natural condition and 3 new wetland areas were created;
- Existing trees were protected at the Mohawk Road Interchange loop and other locations;
- Native plant species including wildflowers and grasses were used for landscaping;
- New planting techniques were used requiring no topsoil. This reduces soil erosion;
- Blasted rock was reused in the road base. Some rock and tree roots were donated to the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project in Hamilton Harbour;
- Researchers used the project to study transplanting techniques for rare wetland plant species.



Wetland areas created in Dartnall Road Interchange loop.



Wildlife Habitat Restoration Project

How are environmental issues being handled?

The Region has an in-house team of experienced environmental professionals who have been working with road engineers and a multi-disciplinary team of environmental specialists.

Is the Region conducting environmental studies for the Expressway?

The Region's environmental team has been working on two areas: 1) understanding the significance of the existing environmental features and, 2) understanding the impact of the road on those features.

Environmental studies have examined:

- water quality
- stream stability
- vegetation and natural habitat
- air quality
- contaminated sites
- noise
- groundwater
- fisheries
- wildlife and birds
- flooding and erosion
- archaeology and heritage
- views of the road as it crosses the Niagara Escarpment

The Expressway's Environment Impacts

How are the environmental impacts of the Expressway being determined?

The Minister of Environment for Ontario approved the steps that the Region must take to identify the impacts. This process began in November and should be completed by early summer. Regional Council will consider a report on the environmental impacts of the road at that time. Construction is expected to begin in the late autumn once the necessary permits and approvals have been obtained.

How will environmental impacts be identified?

The Region's environmental professionals will identify impacts by working with:

- A multi-disciplinary team of specialists
- Engineers
- Government agencies (City of Hamilton, provincial and federal)
- A community stakeholder committee
- The general public

Once the impacts are identified what can the Region do?

Three steps are taken to determine overall impacts.

1. Impacts to the environment resulting from road construction, operation, and maintenance are predicted. This provides a worst case scenario of impacts.



Fisheries biologist releasing fish after sampling

The following Public Open Houses and Meetings are being held during February to bring the community up to date on the Expressway project.

Wednesday

February 18, 1998

7 pm - 9 pm

Elizabeth Bagshaw Public School

- Multi-Purpose Room

350 Albright Road, Hamilton, Ontario

Thursday

February 19, 1998

7 pm - 9 pm

Glendale Secondary School

- Auditorium

145 Rainbow Drive, Hamilton, Ontario

Monday

February 23, 1998

7 pm - 9 pm

Woodward Public School

- Gymnasium

575 Woodward Avenue, Hamilton, Ontario

When the full impacts of the Expressway are identified the Region must show that the road will avoid damage to fish habitat or, where damage is unavoidable, must compensate for any habitat that is lost. The Region and its fisheries biologist have been working with DFO staff over the past few years in anticipation of this approval process.

What about Air Quality?

Special equipment has been placed in the Valley and is monitoring air conditions right now. The data being collected will help predict changes to air quality as a result of the road. This monitoring will continue after construction for a period of six months to verify whether the predictions about changes to air quality were accurate. The impact of transportation in general is one of the matters studied by the Hamilton Air Quality Initiative. A program of actions to improve air quality has been approved by Regional Council.

Does the Region have all the required environmental approvals and permits for the Expressway?

No. While a number of key approvals and permits are in place there are some additional ones that are usually obtained in the final design stages of road projects. Applications for these remaining permits will be made in the coming months as the details of the road design are finalized. The Region has been working with both Provincial and Federal government representatives to ensure that their requirements are properly addressed in the planning, design and construction of this project.

Upcoming Drilling Activities in the Valley

During March and April consultants working for the Region will be drilling in the Red Hill Valley. They are studying soil, groundwater and bedrock. The drilling activities will be managed to minimize disturbance to the environment and the surrounding community.

Questions about the Expressway Project? Contact the Special Projects Office at:

Special Projects Office
The Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth
Transportation Department, Roads Division
25 Main Street West, Suite 1000
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 1H1

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A web site is currently being developed for this project. If you are interested in learning more about the Region you can access information from the internet at www.hamilton-went.on.ca



2. Ways to avoid or reduce the impacts are identified (this is called mitigation)
3. The impacts still remaining after mitigation are called the "net impacts". The Region may be legally required to compensate for some net impacts.

The Region is committed to developing the following types of mitigation for impacts on the Creek:

- A plan to reduce erosion and sedimentation during and after construction
- A plan to manage storm water runoff from the road
- Mechanisms to keep construction activities away from the Creek as much as possible, especially during rainy periods
- Maintaining the Creek in as natural a state as possible.
- Planting vegetation in and along the Creek to strengthen the banks and prevent erosion.

Reducing impacts on plants, fish and wildlife can also be accomplished through:

- Planning the timing and methods of construction and movement of machinery to reduce impacts on nearby trees and plants
- A landscape management plan
- A tree preservation plan showing trees to be protected during construction
- Designing the road including culverts and bridges to enhance fish spawning and migration
- Using native plants and tree species in landscaping and restoration.
(Native means that they occur naturally in this part of Ontario. For example, a Norway maple is not native but a Black Walnut is. Native species tend to be more disease resistant and survive the winters well).

How many trees will be cut down to build the Expressway?

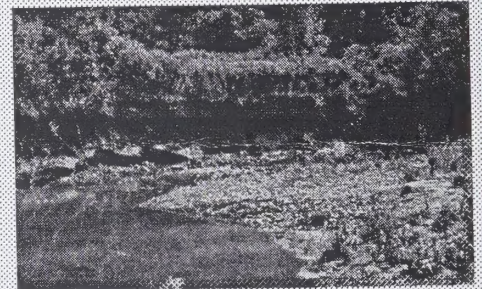
The impact of road construction on trees cannot be determined until final decisions have been made about road design. Impacts on trees and other vegetation will be identified during the early spring.

Once the impacts to vegetation are known mitigating measures will be identified and documented in a Landscape Management and Restoration Plan. The Landscape Management Plan prepared in 1989 will be reviewed and updated. The Region has invited a group of local experts in restoration and plant growing to provide advice on this plan. The Community Stakeholder Committee and the public will also be asked to provide advice.

Will the Expressway affect fish?

Research indicates that there are 24 species of fish in Red Hill Creek. The Federal Fisheries Act requires an approval from Canada's Minister of Fisheries and Oceans for any project that could damage the habitat of fish. Habitat means streams, rivers or lakes where fish swim, feed or spawn. This law will apply to the Expressway project.

A Community Stakeholder Committee (CSC) has been established to provide advice to the Region on matters related to the design and impacts of the Expressway. The Community Stakeholders Committee includes representatives of a variety of community organizations who support, oppose or are fairly neutral about the Expressway. You may already be a member of the 20 community groups or neighbourhood associations involved. The Committee has been meeting regularly since the fall of 1997. The Region is working with the CSC to plan open houses and meetings for the general public so watch for these events. (See notice in this newsletter).



Creek bank erosion

Landscape Management & Restoration Plan

This will identify:

- the types of vegetation and how much will be needed for landscaping and restoration
- where plantings should occur
- how the community can be involved

